

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 21911

FOR EA/TIMBS ONLY

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP, SREF, TH, CASC
SUBJECT: CODEL MANN

REF STATE 191933

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ARE NOTES OF TALKS HIRC STAFFER
JON HOLSTINE HAD WITH REFUGEES DURING HIS JULY 6-11
VISIT TO THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

1. NOTES OF JON HOLSTINE'S TALKS WITH REFUGEES FOLLOW
BELOW. PLEASE EXPRESS REGRETS TO HOLSTINE OVER THE
DELAY, BUT WE THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO COMPARE NOTES OF
HIS DISCUSSION WITH FORMER PATHET LAO MAJOR SIMMA WITH
THOSE OF JCRC REP, LT. COL. PAUL MATHER. MATHER RETURNED
TO BANGKOK JULY 31.

2. PLEASE TELL HOLSTINE THAT THE ONLY NEW INFORMATION
FROM MAJOR SIMMA WAS HIS CLAIM THAT THERE WAS A PATHET
LAO POW CAMP IN NORTHERN LAOS AT SIENG SIU (PHONETIC).
IF HOLSTINE IS INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING UP ON THIS CASE,
WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT HE LOOK AT THE DIA FILE ON
SIMMA, IN WHICH CONSIDERABLE DOUBT IS CAST ON THE
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AUTHENTICITY OF SIMMA'S STORIES, DATING BACK TO 1974.

3. REFUGEE NOTES.

- REFUGEE SOUBINH (NONGKHAI CAMP). SOUBINH SAID THAT
THERE HAD BEEN SOME RESISTANCE ACTIVITY NORTH OF
SAVANNAKHET, NEAR NAKOM PHANOM (NOTE: OPPOSITE

KHAMMOUANE PROVINCE). VIETNAMESE HAVE BEEN ATTACKED. THERE ARE TEN RUSSIAN TANKS IN PAKSANE. THERE ARE RADIO COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN PHU BIA AREA. RESISTANCE FIGHTERS HAVE KILLED 250 SOLDIERS, OVER ONE REGIMENT OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS. THE RESISTANCE FIGHTERS USE STANDARD GUERRILLA TACTICS AND RECEIVE NO HELP FROM THE OUTSIDE. THE PATHET LAO PROVIDE FOOD FOR THE RESISTANCE TROOPS FROM TIME TO TIME. THEY ALSO KILL LAOTIANS, FOR EXAMPLE, THOSE WHO WORK FOR THE VIETNAMESE, SUCH AS STUDENT RESEARCH TEAMS. ABOUT HALF OF THE 500 RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN THE AREA NORTH OF SAVANNAKHET ARE SOLDIERS; THE REST ARE NEW RECRUITS. THERE ARE A FEW PATHET LAO DEFECTORS AMONG THEM. MOST OF THEIR AMMUNITION IS SEIZED FROM THE PATHET LAO--MOSTLY AK-47S.

SOUBINH ALSO KNEW OF AN AIR AMERICA PLANE #662 WHICH WAS SHOT DOWN IN THAKHEK DURING THE RAINY SEASON IN MID-1972. TWO PILOTS WERE KILLED IN THE CRASH; THE REST OF THE CREW WERE MED-EVACUATED IN A C-37.

- HIN SAY LY (DIN DAENG TRANSIT CENTER). HIN SAY LY WAS A CAMBODIAN REFUGEE WHO ESCAPED TO THAILAND FROM VIETNAM.

MISS LY SAID THAT SHE HAD ELEVEN YEARS OF SCHOOLING.
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SHE WAS BORN IN CAMBODIA AND WORKED THERE AS A NURSE. LIFE IN CAMBODIA WAS DIFFICULT. SHE WENT TO VIETNAM SINCE SHE HEARD THAT LIFE THERE WAS BETTER. SHE PROFESSED TO KNOW NOTHING ABOUT CURRENT CONDITIONS IN CAMBODIA.

- TRUYEN HUANG KHAI (DIN DAENG TRANSIT CENTER). KHAI, A VIETNAMESE REFUGEE AT THE DIN DAENG TRANSIT CENTER IN BANGKOK, IS GOING TO THE UNITED STATES.

MR. KHAI SAID THAT HE CAME FROM SAIGON BUT LEFT VIETNAM FROM HA TIEN. WHEN HE APPLIED TO GO FROM SAIGON TO HA TIEN, HE WENT OSTENSIBLY TO CHANGE WORK. HE WORKED AS A MASON IN HA TIEN FOR FOUR MONTHS, BEFORE ESCAPING TO THAILAND. IT WAS A FOUR-DAY JOURNEY TO LAEM SING, THAILAND. HE HAD MADE NO PREPARATIONS HIMSELF. A FRIEND, A MEMBER OF A FISHING FAMILY, BOUGHT A BOAT AND INVITED HIM ALONG. KHAI WAS A FORMER SOLDIER, SO HE FELT THAT HE MUST LEAVE VIETNAM. HE WORKED AT THE AIRPORT AND WAS A CORPORAL. HE HAD ELEVEN YEARS OF SCHOOLING. HIS PARENTS ARE STILL IN SAIGON, HE SAID.

- MAJOR SIVILAY SOMBATPHIBANE (DIN DAENG TRANSIT CENTER).
MAJOR SIVILAY SOMBATPHIBANE WAS A FORMER BATTALION
INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, S-2, IN THE ROYAL LAO ARMY. HE
ESCAPED FROM ATTAPEU MAY 27, 1976.

MAJOR SILVILAY SAID THAT IN 1964 HE SAW THREE AMERICAN
AND THREE FILIPINO AIR AMERICA PILOTS IN A PATHET LAO
JAIL; THEY HAD CRASHED IN NHOMMARAT, SAVANNAKHET. THE
JAIL WAS NORTHEAST OF SAVANNAKET, 150 KILOMETERS EAST
OF THAKHEK.

MAJOR SIVILAY SAID THAT HE ALSO HEARD IN A RE-EDUCATION

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BANGKOK 21911

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SEMINAR THAT THERE WAS A JAIL FOR FOREIGNERS ON THE
VIETNAMESE BORDER IN DAK TRUNK (VIETNAMESE NAME), 70
KILOMETERS FROM ATTAPEU. HE SAID THAT HE BELIEVES THAT
THE JAIL IS STILL THERE. IT WAS A FORTIFIED JAIL UNDER
PATHET LAO AUTHORITIES. THERE WERE ABOUT 300 PRISONERS.
EVERY 15 DAYS, THE VILLAGERS HAD TO SUPPLY FOOD TO THE
JAIL. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THAT THE CAMP WAS STILL
THERE WHEN HE FLED TO THAILAND IN 1976.

THE MAJOR ALSO SAID THAT AFTER RICE ARRIVES FROM THAILAND
IN SAVANNAKHET IT IS TAKEN TO SEPONE TO FEED VIETNAMESE
SOLDIERS RATHER THAN THE PEOPLE. SIVILAY SAID THAT
THERE ARE NOW THREE DIVISIONS OF VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS IN
SAVANNAKHET.

- MAJOR SIMMA OUTHAMONTHI (NONGKHAI CAMP). MAJOR SIMMA
OUTHAMONTHI, A FORMER PATHET LAO MAJOR WHO ESCAPED TO
THAILAND JUNE 19, 1975, SAID THAT HE HAD SEEN FIFTEEN
USAF PILOTS IMPRISONED IN A CAVE IN MITUNA KHAMMOUANE
(NOTE: POSSIBLY MAHAXAI KHAMMOUANE). SIMMA DESCRIBED

HIMSELF AS AN "OLD PATHET LAO" AND A FORMER BATTALION
COMMANDER.

MAJOR SIMMA SAID THAT THREE AMERICAN PILOTS HAD PARA-
CHUTED FROM THEIR PLANE WHEN IT CRASHED IN OCTOBER, 1972,
NEAR MUONG PHIN IN SAVANNAKHET. THEY HAD BEEN CAPTURED
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BY THE LOCAL PEOPLE WHO HAD TURNED THEM OVER TO HIM,
AS BATTALION COMMANDER IN THE AREA. HE HAD STANDING
ORDERS TO TAKE SUCH PERSONS TO THE PRISON CAVE. THE
AMERICANS WERE VERY WEAK FROM LACK OF FOOD WHEN
CAPTURED. SIMMA SAID THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY TAKEN THE
THREE PILOTS TO THE PRISON CAVE IN MITUNA KHAMMOUANE WHERE
THE OTHER TWELVE AMERICANS WERE IN PRISON. THE FIFTEEN
WERE IMPRISONED THERE, UNTIED. A PATHET LAO COLONEL
SOMNUK AND A PAVN LIEUTENANT COLONEL THANG WERE IN CHARGE
OF THE PRISON.

LTC THANG WAS AN ADVISOR, INTERPRETER AND AN INSTRUCTOR
IN INTERROGATION. THE AMERICANS WERE INTERROGATED.
MAJOR SIMMA SAID THAT PATHET LAO POLICY WAS TO INDOC-
TRINATE CAPTURED AMERICANS.

THE PRISON WAS USED FOR PRISONERS FROM PAKSE, SARAVANE, AND
SAVANNAKHET. IN THE NORTH, AMERICAN PRISONERS FROM SAM
NEUA, PHONG SALY, XIENGKKUANG, AND SAYABOURY WERE TAKEN
TO SIENG SIU (PHONETIC). THERE MAY HAVE BEEN 30 TO 40
IN SIENG SIU (WE PRESSED HARD TO GET THIS FIGURE).

MAJOR SIMMA SAID THAT HE WAS AWARE OF OTHER AMERICAN
PILOTS WHO HAD DIED IN CRASHES: 5 IN BAN NONG LAO, LAO
NGAM (SARAVANE), 2 IN NASIEL KHONG SEDONE, AND 2 IN NA SE
(ALL PHONETIC). THESE LOCATIONS WERE THIRTY KILOMETERS
OR SO FROM SAVANNAKHET. ALL THE PLANES EXPLODED, THE
BODIES WERE BURNED BEYOND RECOGNITION AND WERE NOT BURIED.

MAJOR SIMMA SAID THAT HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY AMERICANS'
BEING EXECUTED OR DYING IN PRISON. HE SAID THAT HE HAD
NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM IN THE PRISON AFTER HE
DELIVERED THEM THERE. BUT WHEN THE PATHET LAO TOOK
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CONTROL OF LAOS, THE AMERICANS WERE TRADED FOR
VIETNAMESE PRISONERS OF WAR. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT
KNOW WHERE THEY WERE TAKEN IN VIETNAM, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS

STILL THE BATTALION COMMANDER WHEN THEY WERE TAKEN AWAY.

SIMMA SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT RESISTANCE FIGHTERS RECENTLY FIGHTING IN LAOS. HE HAD HEARD, HE SAID, THAT THERE WERE 347 RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN PAKSE. SOME OF HIS OWN MEN ARE NOW FIGHTING THE PATHET LAO, HE SAID.

MAJOR SIMMA SAID THAT HE HAD FOLLOWED (PRIME MINISTER) KAYSONE BEFORE 1962. HE CHANGED HIS MIND IN 1973 WHEN HE DECIDED THAT HE DID NOT LIKE THE KAYSONE GOVERNMENT, WHEN HE FOUND OUT THAT IT WAS NOT NEUTRALIST BUT COMMUNIST. ABRAMOWITZ

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